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ABSTRACT

The Hobman Clubs are intergenerational sports and leisure clubs that were started in several cities in the United Kingdom with funding from the David Hobman Charitable Trust. Since 1988, Hobman Clubs have provided a model for conducting intergenerational community activities in secondary school facilities when no school activities are taking place. In 1993-94, the success of existing Hobman clubs was evaluated and the feasibility of extending the network of clubs was assessed. Site visits were made to Hobman clubs in Carlisle, Cumbria, and Huntington, and individuals involved in trying to develop new clubs were interviewed. Those club members contacted were generally pleased with the clubs' operation/activities and were surprised that more schools have not organized clubs. Although each club studied had embraced the original Hobman Club objective of bridging the generation gap through sports/leisure activities, all had also identified their own priorities and begun focusing on programs/activities responsive to local needs. It was recommended that a network of Hobman Clubs be established to support new initiatives and act as models for further development. The importance of having each club reflect the unique needs of its own community and cooperation between clubs and host schools were emphasized. (MN)

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ED 387 609

Hobman Clubs: A Model For Intergenerational Learning

Pam Coare

Introduction by David Hobman

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX AT BRIGHTON

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Commissioned by the David Hobman Charitable Trust

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Introduction

Many of the most imaginative social ventures grow from the vision and flair of people who identify a challenge in their own locality and do something about it. If they are seen to address a universal issue, wider application follows later; but the process takes time.

This is exactly what happened in Carlisle. Age Concern saw the potential value of establishing a club for active elders in a school where they could benefit from its amenities whilst, at the same time, contributing to its corporate life. Fortunately, for everyone concerned, St Aidan's School was ready to make this innovation in inter-generational collaboration possible.

The decision to call the Club 'Hobman' was nothing to do with the Trustees. It seemed appropriately impartial and was chosen by Carlisle in recognition of my long personal commitment to the importance of recognising the possibilities of ageing, rather than on concentrating on its handicaps. Old people are a resource and not a burden.

Whilst the Trustees welcomed the decision to identify the Club with our family in this way, and were glad to be able to make a modest financial contribution to launching it; we assume no proprietorial rights towards it, or the others which followed. It is not the name of the Clubs which matters; but what they do, and the way in which they set about involving their members.

The importance of this movement in embryo is for those expensive community resources called schools to be better used for life-time learning. They must open their doors to the members of their communities who have largely paid for them through their national and local taxes.

The first Club in Carlisle was followed by three more. They have been established in West Cumberland, Birmingham and Huntingdon: now a number of others are in the process of formation. The prime movers have been community organisers, health educators, students and, of course, teachers.

It was appropriate that the development of the Clubs coincided with the European Year of Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations. Reference was made to it in the official report on the British contribution to this European initiative.

The Department of Health awarded two grants to the Trust in support of the Clubs: the first to help promulgate the scheme and the second to support a development programme. The grant from the DoH was augmented by others from the Helen Hamlyn Foundation, the Saga Holiday Company and an Anonymous Foundation. The Trustees are most grateful for this practical expression of support which augmented our own funds.

The money available to the Trustees made it possible to commission BASE (British Association for Service to the Elderly) to carry out the fieldwork. The Department of Continuing Education at the University of Sussex agreed to assess the schemes. The Sussex Report, prepared by Pam Coare, which follows , was designed to help to identify the potential of this practical approach to empowerment of older people, as well as the barriers to progress which have to be understood if they are to be overcome.

Whilst there must be a degree of disappointment that new Clubs were not finally established during the period of the programme, between the autumn of 1994 and the early part of 1995, the Report gives a number of clear indications about the best way forward against a background of the severe economic pressures which schools are facing.

There are, of course, many other excellent schemes in which young and old people come together in providing mutual support. There are Clubs organised by volunteers for old people as well as many programmes in which students visit old people, perform tasks on their behalf, escort them on shopping trips and so on.

The essential difference in the Carlisle approach, which must remain the model for any free-standing 'Club in a School', is reflected in the way in which it is self-programming and the people involved - both old and young - see each other as partners. In the best tradition of mutuality, 'the doers' and 'the done by' become indistinguishable in the process.

Our Family Trust, established with my most generous leaving present from friends and colleagues, when I retired from the Directorship of Age Concern England in 1987, has been glad to be associated with the first stage of what might well be an important development. However, we do not have the resources to take the next steps.

It is now for others to help establish a growing network, if it is agreed that one is needed, although we have set aside a small fund to help with pump-priming grants for Clubs started this year, as part of the development programme.

Apart from the satisfaction of making a modest contribution to the emergence of a practical mechanism for bringing the generations together, and in improving the quality of their lives; we are grateful to all those people, known and unknown, who have been involved in this exploration.

David Hobman
Chairman
David Hobman Charitable Trust
Storrington
April 1995

Hobman Clubs : A Model for Intergenerational Learning.

The David Hobman Charitable Trust was established in 1987, following David Hobman's retirement as Director of Age Concern England. His friends and colleagues collected approximately £25,000 as a retirement gift, which he used to set up the Trust. Subsequently the Trust has attracted further funding, including grants from the Department of Health and from a number of other Trusts and Foundations.

The Trust has used its resources to pursue four main objectives:

- the support of local groups of active old people who are directly engaged in promoting services or developing leisure activities;
- the research and teaching of gerontology on a multi-disciplinary basis;
- activities designed to attract people towards careers in ageing;
- work overseas for, and with, older people.

In 1988 Age Concern Carlisle identified the need for sports and leisure facilities specifically for older people, and applied to the David Hobman Trust for a `pump-priming' grant. This money was used to establish a club at a local sports centre, and in recognition of his interest and support, it was called the Hobman Club. Shortly after its successful beginning, the club was forced to find a new venue and moved to St. Aidan's School, where the practice of intergenerational learning developed.

The philosophy that underpins the clubs addresses a variety of issues, including the value of interaction between different generations, making better use of expensive resources and the potential of a variety of local communities to actively engage in leisure activities of their choice. This philosophy is not greatly removed from that which culminated in the creation of Community Schools. During the 1920's Henry Morris, Chief Education Officer for Cambridgeshire identified the value of a vital interaction between the school and its surrounding communities:

> "The two central aims in the development of any Community School are first to effect a fundamental change in relations between the school and its community and second, to improve the quality of neighbourhood life."

The Community School movement, however, enjoyed limited success, and in many cases now offer little more in terms of community interaction than a separate adult education department offering traditional evening classes, and lacking any creative relationship with the statutory day school provision.

Hobman Clubs are perceived as something different. All those I spoke with who were involved in the setting up of the Clubs, saw the members as part of an interactive process that involved both them and the children. This intergenerational aspect is crucial to understanding the central thrust of the clubs functioning within a school, and at least part of the time, running concurrently with the school timetable. How this intergenerational aspect works in the existing clubs will be explored in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

Secondary schools facilities are also a potential resource for all the Community, and are used for less than two hundred days per year for statutory, formal school activities. Many schools stand empty each evening and weekend, and during school holidays, vulnerable to burglary and vandalism. By extending the franchise of the local community in accessing these facilities, schools can be protected and community life enhanced. Elderly people have supported schools through a lifetime of paying local and national taxes, and may, therefore, be able to make a strong case to be amongst the first to reap the benefits.

The third, central tenet is strongly influenced by David Hobman's vision of an active, older population, who have a wealth of experience to utilise and share, and who do not wish to be passive recipients of care. The culture of 'doing to' certain groups within the community, including the elderly, is strongly resisted in the literature that explores and explains the concept of Hobman Clubs. This may cause tensions around the existing framework of individual clubs and their members. It is apparent that the constituency of the Clubs, linked as this is to publicity and recruitment, varies enormously.

These three themes - a self-directing, active membership of elderly people working in a dynamic relationship with it's host school, sharing activities that include club members and students and making use of the schools resources - continue to underpin the philosophy that David Hobman would espouse for the clubs. The first club in Carlisle, therefore, became the model for those that would follow, and continues to offer the clearest practical example of the original concept.

Hobman Club Research : An Introduction.

The first Hobman Club, in Carlisle, attracted considerable publicity, and a number of organisations throughout the country wrote to the Hobman Trust for details of the scheme. They were supplied with a brochure outlining the philosophy behind the clubs and with suggestions and guidelines for embarking on a similar venture. Although a detailed list had been kept of those making enquiries, no follow up contact had been made to determine whether clubs were established following the initial receipt of information.

The Hobman Trust were anxious to assess the success of the scheme and to promote what everyone involved agreed was an excellent idea. It therefore proposed a Development Programme for 1993/94, which would address these issues and would conclude the work of the Trust. Finally, a written report would be presented to statutory bodies involved in health and education who might be persuaded of the viability and value of such a scheme within schools and offer the appropriate funding.

The Development Programme was divided into two main strands: the first part was undertaken by the British Association for Services to the Elderly (BASE) whose role was to survey the existing list of contacts, and 'to establish a number of Hobman Clubs for older people in schools where the members will make use of available resources, pursue their own interests and develop relationships with pupils on an individual basis and through joint activities'. BASE would endeavour 'to have between ten and fifteen clubs in existence within twelve months in a range of schools within urban, inner-city and rural areas'.

The second strand was undertaken by the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Sussex. CCE were engaged by the Hobman Trust to 'assess the programme; the feasibility of extending the network of clubs, and the resources required in terms of material and development time (staff or volunteers) to establish schemes in schools throughout the country'.

These two strands of the Development Programme were obviously connected: the assessment of the existing programme could only be undertaken when we were aware how many clubs existed. This had implications for the timescale of the project, but was not as problematic as I feared, as it was clear at a fairly early stage that those clubs that were up and running were ones we already knew about. I chose to visit

three of the existing clubs, each of which had a different inception and been active for differing lengths of time. I also thought it would be appropriate to visit Age Concern (Ryde) who, along with the Totland volunteer association, the Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme (RSVP), had made considerable efforts to promote the ethos of Hobman Clubs without generating sufficient interest to form one. In addition, I spoke with a number of people involved in trying to develop new Clubs and to the one existing Hobman Club in Birmingham that I did not visit.

However, the overall timescale did raise particular issues for the research. An initial meeting took place between David and Erica Hobman, representing the Trust, Cynthia Wylde, director of the British Association for Service to the elderly, and Fred Gray and Pam Coare from the University of Sussex. Yasmin Brown who was responsible for the dissemination of material to the enquiring organisations was also present. At this meeting the nature of the project and a timetable for the work was agreed. With a report on the project required before the end of the financial year 1994/95, it was evident that a considerable amount of work needed to be undertaken quickly, particularly if the network of clubs was to be expanded. Given the timescale, and the long school summer holiday which would impose other limitations on the early development of new clubs, it was not feasible that any new initiatives would come to fruition before the Autumn term (September 1994). Consequently, little useful information would be available as to the effectiveness or success of any new Hobman Clubs that might be supported by the BASE field workers before the writing of the report.

There was also a tension, as in much research of this kind, between an audit of what was happening and an evaluation based on my own criteria of success and that of David Hobman. Each of the clubs I visited presented a unique situation: the size and nature of the host school, the organisational structures that were in place, the geographic area and size of elderly population, the pattern of established community activities and the expectations of both the school and the membership of the club. These differences and disparities made a comparison between the existing clubs of little practical use. However, it was possible to look at how closely each of the clubs fulfilled the original concept of the Hobman Club, and what common ideas and lessons could be drawn from their experiences that would be useful for other schools who wished to embark on such a partnership.

St. Aidan's School, Carlisle.

Carlisle is an affluent city with a variety of social and educational opportunities and a strong church presence. There is also a less affluent, rural population experiencing high unemployment. St Aidan's is a grant maintained school and whilst its catchment area reflects this social divide, a disproportionate number of the pupils are from disadvantaged home backgrounds.

Hobman Club members do not reflect the social profile of the day school students, tending to come from the immediate area and to be retired professional and/or middle class people. This is also the only Hobman club with a large number of men amongst its one hundred members, and unlike the other two clubs visited, members are able to use their own transport to reach the school.

Having received a grant from the Hobman Trust to develop leisure activities with local elderly people, Age Concern Carlisle used the local press to promote the setting up of a club, focusing on health related activities, and meeting in a sports centre. This was the first initiative of Age Concern's newly appointed Elinor Tulip. The club was christened Hobman in recognition of the Hobman Trust's support. Elinor recruited an initial group of eight members through local publicity, and organised the activities. However, it was made explicit in this early publicity that the club would reflect the desires of the members, and would rely on their motivation for its' success and longevity. The club made a slow but successful start, but with the sudden closure of the sports centre, it needed to find a new home. Elinor approached St. Aidan's School and was offered accommodation on the school site. The club grew through the network of contacts that Elinor and the early members made in Carlisle, and has now been running successfully for six years.

The Carlisle Hobman Club, unlike the other two I visited, is particularly fortunate in having exclusive use of a room, and this has been renovated and equipped specifically for the purpose. (There are some minor tensions over its use for other purposes on occasion.) The school is able to make this space available as it has excess capacity and sees the facility as being available in the long term. The room is available for use throughout the week, but in practice is only used by the club for one half day each week, with additional specific groups, such as the hand chimes society, meeting on other days. Approximately thirty of the members attend regularly and take part in a variety of activities organised through an elected committee. Activities include short mat bowls, china painting, and a variety of crafts and games. Speakers from various organisations are also invited to the club. A large number of the members have active

social lives and therefore the Hobman club is only part of a weekly timetable. However, they do offer support outside the club to fellow members who need it, for example those who are ill or bereaved.

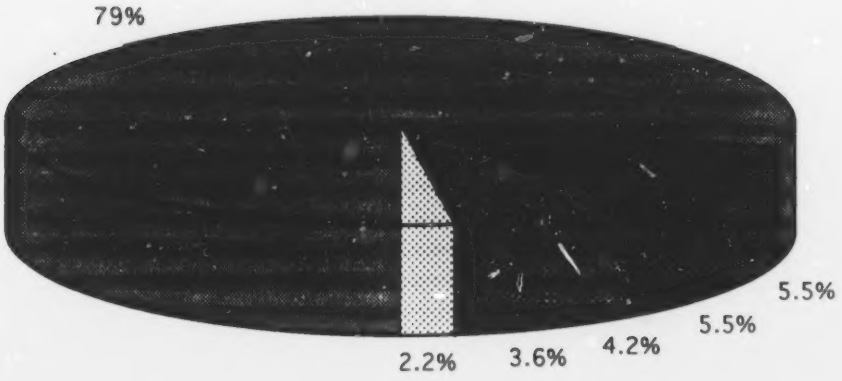
The school is clearly delighted by the links it has forged with the club and members are pleased to be able to access the school facilities. The Hobman club members I spoke with feel at home in the school and enjoy the informal and formal contact with the school students and staff. The mutual benefits to both groups are clear. The school makes a small amount of income through Age Concerns letting fee, the school has access to a 'living resource', it can promote its community ethos, gain good publicity and ambassadors for the school, whilst using underutilised space. In return, the Hobman club has access to excellent facilities: dedicated space for club activities, the hall, a gym, technology and art facilities and meals.

The intergenerational projects initiated in the school have also been of benefit to both the adults and children. Most of the members have enjoyed sharing their memories and their skills and a variety of successful joint fund raising projects have been undertaken. Elinor emphasised the need for the club to offer itself to the school, to be proactive in building fruitful partnerships with the staff and the students. Initially, a regular meeting took place between the committee members and a representative of the staff which promoted the necessary liaison. However, this formal structure exists at best only tenuously now. Club members identified this as a situation they regretted and expressed a wish for more contact of this kind. They also clearly felt able to initiate renewed contact, which reflects the confidence with which the members see their established place within the school, whilst maintaining the independent functioning of the club.

Identifying the benefits for the school students is more problematic. Children who may have little or no contact with elderly family members or neighbours can and do benefit from the formal contact: sharing a sense of history, local continuity and experience, with an adult population in the school who do have time for individual contact and support. Informal contact is not measurable in terms of a product: a written project informed by a shared exploration or a successful fund raising event. Yet a regular interaction in the dining hall, the corridors and outside the school in the town, has meant that both groups appear at ease with each other. Children stopped in the corridor to talk to the club member who kindly showed me around, joked about saving her some lunch and responded easily to questions. In return, club members spoke with pleasure and affection about the students and their shared activities.

Obviously, as the only Hobman Club that has been active for more than a year, it is easier to identify its potential as a self-directed facility for the elderly in the community. However, the club did need considerable input from Elinor in its early days, to organise activities , generate enthusiasm and increase membership. It has also gone through periods when recruiting and keeping members has proved extremely difficult. Energetic support from both Elinor and early club members has been an ongoing requirement for the successful continuation of the club.

Carlisle
City Area Total Population : 69831.



Statistical Information : Population Census 1991.

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Ehenside School, Cleator Moor, Cumbria.

Ehenside School launched a Hobman club in December 1993. This followed discussions between representatives of Age Concern, the Health Development Unit, the Groundwork Trust and the Head of the school. All the participants had seen the publicity that accompanied the Hobman Club in Carlisle, and felt it would be a useful model for a project in the village.

The School is situated in the small community of Cleator Moor in Cumbria. The village has retained a strong sense of community, and although it is suffering from high levels of unemployment, younger members of the community are not moving away in large numbers. The Sellafield nuclear plant is the only employer of a significant size locally and is also a major financial resource for local projects and improvements. These include major sponsorship to improve facilities at the local hospital, but also small scale support for employees and their dependants. On the day of my visit, for example, Sellafield had organised a trip for the widows of previous employees.

There is also a history of intergenerational activity and support in the community, with examples such as the sheltered shopping scheme at Christmas which involves members of Ehenside school, their families and the frail elderly of the village shopping together in Whitehaven.

There are cultural and historical divisions within the village, based on religion. The area was originally settled by Irish immigrants, and is known locally as 'Little Ireland'. Even following considerable emigration to Canada and New Zealand over the last one hundred years, the community retains an insularity perhaps unusual outside of the North of England. This has implications for any organised activities: neither of the two social clubs within the village attract members from both groups.

From its inception, the Hobman Club has relied heavily on the enthusiasm and energy of Loretto Messanger who works for Age Concern, Northwest Cumbria, and Jan Clarke, a member of the Ehenside staff. The club has sixteen members, most of whom attend each week. Participants are between sixty and seventy five years of age, and although none would be described as frail, all needed transport to attend the club initially. However, following the first year of support with transport, all the club members now make their way to the school independently, and this has not affected attendance in any way.

Loretto Messenger played the largest part in promoting the idea of a Hobman Club amongst the local elderly population, talking to the existing social clubs and putting up posters. However, it was the initial involvement of Edna Pearson of the `Tea and Chat' club, who motivated the people there to attend, and Edna continues to be an energetic member of both clubs. As the `Tea and Chat' club has been the main recruiting ground, it has meant that the Hobman Club has attracted an older age group than initially envisaged by Jan and Loretto, and this may in turn mean that younger people in the community exclude themselves.

All the members of the club at this time are women. Local men who come from a strong working class background do not see attendance at any of the local social clubs as the normal pattern of behaviour for a man. There are also less men who live alone in the community: women tend to outlive men by many years and may, therefore, look for company outside their immediate families. This has certainly been the pattern in the 'Over 60's', the 'Tea and Chat' and the church social clubs, and is at present a pattern repeated in the Hobman Club.

The Club has been very structured from the outset, and both Jan and Loretto attend each week to organise and support the activities. Many of these are art and craft based, and the club was awaiting the delivery of a rag rug frame at the time of my visit. Speakers are also invited to talk to the members on a wide range of issues, including claiming benefits or the RAF discussing the problem of low flying over the county. Outings have been arranged to local theatres, and reminiscence work is also developing as a shared activity with the school students. However, at present there is little direct involvement of club members in the organisation of these activities. Four Year 7 children attend each week, and these children are chosen on a rota basis by Jan. Consequently, each week different children attend, and considerable status is now attached to being 'chosen'. The children share in the activities, talk to the Club members and help to make the tea and wash the cups. The school is happy with this fairly limited opportunity for intergenerational contact, and sees ways of developing its scope in the future. Loretto is particularly keen to see the club members more actively involved in the classroom, mentioning their interest in using the computers as a possible starting point, and this has begun to happen during the lunch break.

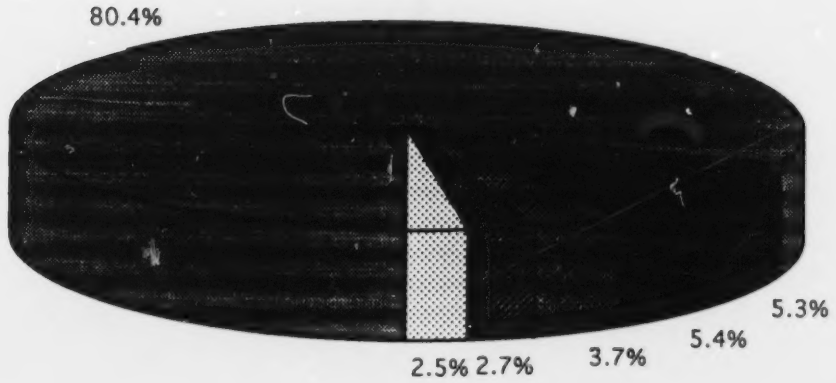
However, Ehenside is a growing school, and the pressure on space is a major problem in expanding the size or nature of the Hobman Club. There is no foreseeable possibility for the club to meet more than one afternoon a week, or be able to exclusively access school facilities other than the community room that they use at present. Also, unlike its Carlisle predecessor, there is no income generated for the

school and in a time of economic stringency, the Head is aware of the cost to the school in terms of Jan's time. However, he is clearly prepared to live with this, recognising as he does the positive effects of the presence of a diversity of ages in the school. Imaginative ways of covering the costs of staff time are also being explored, including the possibility of sponsorship from Sellafield.

The role that Jan and Loretto play in the club has been crucial to its success, and both are clearly committed to the philosophy behind the Hobman club as they perceive it. However, this may not be a philosophy shared by all the Hobman Clubs. They share the view that bringing the two age groups together is of great value in creating the opportunity to achieve mutual understanding of other's needs and potential, but a culture of helping the elderly does underlie many of the activities that take place. They both feel the club would continue if they supported it less now, but at the same time as expressing this view, are clearly identifying their role for the future. Jan in particular is seen by all those involved in the Club as a source of ideas, resources and motivation. The few club members I spoke with all said they would like more activities, although were unclear what these might be, and whilst acknowledging how busy the teachers were, did not see the initiative beginning with the members. The role of the school as organisers of a club for them, rather than as a place to facilitate their activities, affects their perception of their potential involvement. Jan's position is thus pivotal: coming up with the activities and materials, organising the children and endeavouring to promote a new activity amongst her fellow staff.

The idea of a club organised by the members, making use of under-utilised school resources, and acting as a living resource for learning in the classroom is not a model that the Ehenside Hobman Club has yet achieved, or one it may choose to aspire to. The club will clearly need to evolve to meet the needs of its particular constituency. It is too soon to be able to make any informed judgements as to how quickly the participants will feel sufficiently empowered to act for themselves, how the development of the club will reflect this change or the long term effects on the quality of individual or community life. However, the enthusiasm of the club members was clear in all the positive comments they made to me about the school, the children and the staff, and the commitment of the Head in supporting Jan's continued involvement in the Club is a sound basis on which to proceed.

Cleator
Total Population : 7665



Statistical Information : Population Census 1991.

St. Peter's School, Huntingdon.

St. Peter's is a grant maintained school with approximately 1,300 children on role. The catchment area is mixed socially and economically, drawing children from a large local council estate and from a generally more affluent rural community outside Huntingdon. Children from outlying areas are bussed to the school. The school has a large Sixth Form population (years 12 and 13), who follow a variety of core courses which include Community Service, and the Hobman Club is seen as one aspect of this.

Within the Huntingdon area, Community Education and the Health Promotion Service had identified the need for more community work involving older people. The Headteacher at St. Peter's, David Furness, wished to promote links with the Community, and supported the initiative with the appointment of Martina Perry in 1993. Martina has responsibility for community development and has been given access to a small budget.

Working with the Health Promotion Unit and Huntingdon Patch, an organisation concerned with the needs of the elderly, the school agreed to involve sixth formers in a community project. The extensive publicity that surrounded the initial innovatory Hobman Club in Carlisle, particularly that which appeared in the Times Educational Supplement, aroused the interest of Martina and the Head. A framework already existed which they could use in setting up their own club, and they were able to identify positive outcomes for both the school and the community. Eileen Paul from Patch has subsequently been funded for one half day a week to work on the project in its first year.

Over the course of the academic year, Martina, Eileen and members of the sixth form produced publicity and organised 'taster' sessions to gauge the interest amongst possible participants, staff in the school and the children. The advertising stressed that the participants should be active and fifty plus, although the initial members are all over sixty. The Hobman Club was launched in September 1994 with a membership of six women. This limited initial response worries Martina, although it may be due to the variety of opportunities that already exist for this age group in the town, rather than Martina's perceived 'failure' to attract members. In addition, the lack of transport for potential participants is proving a considerable problem in establishing the club.

At the time of my visit the club had met three times in the large and pleasant sixth form centre. This allows for considerable informal social interaction between the

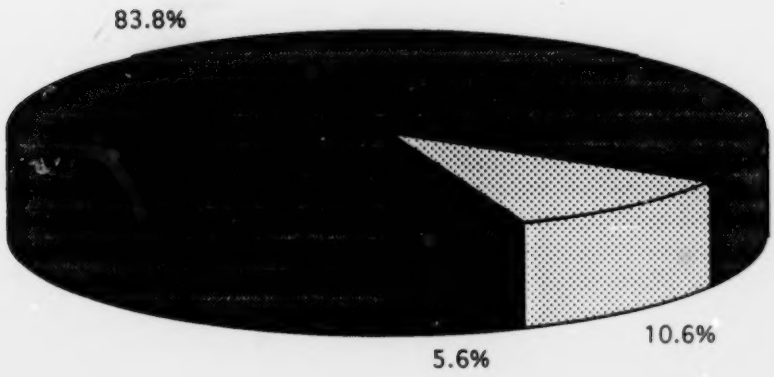
older pupils and the Hobman Club members. Contact with the younger children takes place spontaneously in the dining hall, or in formal classroom situations.

Members of the club at present use a limited range of board games and cards during the one afternoon a week that they meet, or make pre-arranged classroom visits, for example in music or history. Martina sees this weekly involvement as intrinsic to the philosophy of the club. In the initial discussions surrounding the establishment of tne club, potential members identified their motives for attending in terms of being actively involved in what is happening in the classroom.

At such an early stage it would be unrealistic to expect all the staff to be fully aware or enthusiastic about the potential of intergenerational work, and some have expressed initial doubts about a weekly involvement in classes, whilst welcoming occasional contact. Martina is clearly working hard to raise staff awareness but, in common with most teachers, has a number of conflicting pressures on her time. It may therefore prove impossible for her to maintain the level of organisation involved in sustaining a weekly classroom visit, given the pressure she is clearly working under, and the demands of the National Curriculum. Sharing the experience of the two more established Hobman Clubs within a 'network' would obviously help to support new ventures such as St. Peter's, and help to relieve the pressure on staff time.

The school management team has identified the public relations value of the project, the teaching resource that club members can offer, and the opportunity for students to become involved in a school-based community project and to identify such a project on their CVs. The Hobman Club has also generated considerable interest and publicity, being featured in the local press and on local radio, with Anglia Television also interested in highlighting the club. In a time of competition between schools, when attracting parents to make a positive choice in favour of a particular school has profound implications for a schools budget, such publicity can be a useful marketing tool. This is in no way to detract from a genuine motivation shared by St. Peter's and the other participating schools to build better links with their local communities, but a recognition of the place of schools in the emerging education market place.

Huntingdon
City Area Total Population : 15434.



Statistical Information : Population Census 1991.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

- Each Club will be unique and reflect the community it serves, whilst demonstrating a commitment to the broader Hobman Club philosophy of intergenerational learning.

- The school management team and Governing Body need to be committed to a stated aim of promoting and supporting community links.

- To ensure successful recruitment Hobman Clubs need to be promoted in a way that is appropriate to the local community.

- Appropriate research needs to be undertaken to explore other local initiatives that involve the elderly, to avoid conflicts in timing, etc.

- The issue of transport be considered in advance of targeted publicity.

- Initial funding is found to 'pump prime' new Clubs, and that the possibility of on-going financial support is not ignored.

- The success or otherwise of Hobman Clubs is dependent on a high level of support from the host school for at least the first year.

- Empowerment is often a slow, negotiated process, needing time to evolve and is unlikely to be successful if the process is not participatory.

- Club members need to take a proactive role in building a working relationship with the host school, and appropriate structures established for the exchange of ideas.

- At least part of the time for club meetings should be when children can share activities, both formally and informally.

- Both Club members and the host schools look for ways to extend intergenerational learning opportunities.

- A network of Clubs be established to support new initiatives and act as models for further development.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

When David Hobman described the Hobman Club initiative to me at our first meeting, he concluded by reflecting that he had never come across anyone who, when told about it, did not think it was an excellent idea. I have shared this experience during my year working on this research project. The participants I met in existing projects expressed surprise that more schools have not taken up the idea and explored the possibilities within their own institutions. The main problem, however, for the research was the small number of Clubs that were running, and the comparatively short time that all but one had been in operation. Thus, the number of people available to reflect on the process of establishing a Hobman Club, of the success or failure of such ventures, was limited. The research, therefore, explores the issues raised by the three clubs I visited, and places these comments within the wider context of the host schools and their communities.

If the philosophy behind the Clubs is widely embraced by those participating in the scheme, each club identifies its own priorities within this framework. The desirability of community development, of bridging an ever widening generation gap was emphasised by all. The opportunity for the older members of the community to see the positive side of a younger generation commonly portrayed at best as thoughtless and at worst threatening, of young people seeing the elderly as active, interesting and interested, was applauded in communities where traditional interaction of this kind in extended families, the Church or employment, no longer exists. Eric Midwinter describes this concept of community as 'the existence of a network of reciprocal social relationships, which amongst other things ensure mutual aid and give those who experience it a sense of well-being'(Midwinter, 1975).

However, this interaction and building of mutual understanding is not a process that can be hurried or indeed set in place and left to happen unsupported. Each host school or initiating agency had recognised the need for a considerable level of sustained support. This support needs to be evident at a number of different managerial and institutional levels. Secondary schools have much weaker home/school relations than primary schools, with little in class support or parental participation. The value of such an interaction at academic, recreational or managerial levels is increasingly recognised by schools who can tap the expertise of the local population. Thus, the desire to establish community links is increasingly reflected in schools aims and

prospectuses, and is being actively sought by Heads and school governors who bear the responsibility for the successful marketing and development of their schools.

If formal contact between Hobman Club members and students is to be more than intermittent and haphazard, then particular staff need to be identified as the contact point for the organisation of an ongoing, structured programme of intergenerational activities. This will also ease the lines of communication between the school at an institutional level, and the Hobman Club members, and give a cohesive framework to a programme of developing links. However, this degree of staff input requires time, and this in turn has cost implications for the host schools. These need to be recognised in the early stages of planning, and the necessary amount of time set aside for at least one member of staff to fulfil this role. The Government policy which saw the introduction of local management of schools, and devolved the control of budgets into the hands of individual schools, allows for appropriate budgetary decisions of this kind to be made.

This cost element needs to be put in a wider context of cost-effectiveness. Greater participation of the community in the school has many benefits. Parental choice when exercised in choosing a school for their child will be informed by a number of factors, including the school's local image. Hobman Club members can, and do, help to inform this local knowledge, acting as ambassadors for the school in the community. The development of such an initiative also allows the host school to identify a unique character within the community, which can help in recruitment. Furthermore, the potential use of the school outside normal school hours and terms makes more cost-effective use of resources, and thus tax payers money, while increasing the number of people in the community who use the school resources decreases the cost per person.

Staff in schools hosting the newer Hobman Clubs were conscious of the need to organise activities on a weekly basis, to arrange for the formal participation either of club members in the school curriculum or of children in the club activities, and to promote the good relationship between school staff and club members. The introduction of the National Curriculum has placed considerable constraints on school teachers, who can no longer deviate significantly from a proscribed timetable of work, to include the innovatory intergenerational opportunities that the presence of Hobman Club members could stimulate. Staff have also identified this pressure to meet nationally set targets and complete burdensome paperwork as a reason for the lack of developmental community work within their schools. Thus, staff members need to be part of a school ethos that embraces the participation of the community, if they are to create an environment where shared learning can take place.

Once established the Hobman Club members informal contact with the students needs little direct support, given appropriate opportunities for the two generations to meet. In existing Clubs this has been successful in the most overt way in the lunch break, when adults and children share the school dining hall. One Head described the improved behaviour of the students when eating alongside the Club members, whilst members at another school welcomed the opportunity to eat food they would not normally cook for themselves. The Carlisle Club members also stressed the value of the informal liaison that arose when they worked with the school students to raise money together for charity during 'Red Nose Week'.

The space allocated for the use of the Club can also enhance this informal contact, particularly if at least some of the activities are carried out in a shared, communal space. This has worked extremely well at St. Peters School in Huntingdon, where sixth form students and club members both use the sixth form centre and where they inevitably meet. A limited number of Clubs will enjoy the luxury of dedicated space, as at St. Aidan's. This will only be possible in schools that have spare capacity, and may not be a situation that exists in the long term. However, whilst offering the highly desirable opportunity to establish a comfortable and suitably equipped base with flexibility of use, it can also mean that the Club may become removed from the informal interaction that accompanies life in an institution.

The value of this informal contact in establishing intergenerational understanding and 'reciprocal social relationships' is perhaps one of the principal arguments for Hobman Clubs being situated in schools rather than in other local institutions. Many schools already relate to their communities in a variety of disparate ways. This contact may be achieved through reciprocal invitation to and from community groups, or by the more formal and structured presence of an adult education department. However, the relationship that exists between groups that meet by invitation or tangentially through the shared use of a building, and those who work together within the same institution is very different. There is a continuing opportunity for these groups to develop a relationship that will allow greater understanding and sympathy.

Additionally, schools are mainly well-serviced by public transport and, where appropriate, by buses for children who live in outlying, often rural, areas. This level of service can be harnessed for the use of Club members, and may go some way towards solving the transport problem identified by two schools. Transport difficulties had been seen as a barrier to the successful establishment of a Hobman Club and, as a reflection of the social and economic profile of a particular community, will need to

be considered. If potential Club members do not have access to their own transport and cannot afford taxis, then regular attendance at a Hobman Club may well be a casualty. Clearly, this needs to be addressed in advance of targeting publicity at a particular group or in a particular geographic area. Using public transport or school buses may be one solution; using a school mini-bus to collect the participants may be another. Both of these solutions place an additional responsibility on the school organisation, and may not ultimately allow for the development of a Club that can use the facilities in a flexible way. The use of transport systems designed around the school day will limit the time that the Hobman Club members can avail themselves of facilities. This may be particularly counterproductive, as the opportunity to use school halls, gyms or specialist subject rooms, may be more appropriate at the end of the school day, when the buildings remain open for extra curricular activities and cleaning, and when residual heating can be utilised.

The use of school buildings as a base for Hobman Club activities during holidays is problematic as it creates additional costs in opening and securing the building, and in heating. This effectively means that most of the Clubs will function in school terms only, and will therefore not significantly increase the use of school resources out of traditional term time. One Club chairman pointed particularly to this as a problem for the club membership: activities were often disrupted by school holidays, day closures or the demands of the examination timetable.

The decline in joint activities experienced by the Hobman Club in Carlisle, and the difficulty experienced by other Clubs in developing intergenerational activities within the curriculum needs to be addressed imaginatively, if Hobman Clubs are not to become simply another 'letting'. Most participating schools are working to a fairly narrow model. In this model the Club runs concurrently with school activities, and within the framework of the school day. Thus, formal contact takes place within a subject base and focuses on a particular area of study, or embraces a variety of subjects within a school project. Examples of this would be the use of reminiscence work around living in the second world war that informs and enhances a history lesson, or sharing memories and music from earlier Christmas' for a joint Christmas production. All these activities are valuable and should be maintained and developed wherever possible. However, these activities need to be organised, and require considerable amounts of time to be directed at their successful management. It should be possible to develop other models of working that would tap existing skills that Club members could share, create opportunities for publicity and improved recruitment, and impinge less on the demanding timetable of the National Curriculum.

I should like to explore one possible model. St. Peter's School in Huntingdon, in common with many schools throughout the country, places considerable emphasis on the value of experiences that allow 'all pupils to reach their maximum potential', and enrich their experiences. These experiences take many forms, but often include outdoor activities, visits to places of interest or community based projects. At St. Peter's the time given over to these activities is called 'Curriculum Enrichment Week'. When talking to Martina it struck me that the desire of Hobman Club members to be directly involved with the school students, the difficulty of recruiting new members, and the school's aim of offering a variety of stimulating activities to its students, could be met within one community project.

The school is situated alongside a large housing estate, and many of the adult residents are past pupils of the school. A project to look at what education and the school in particular had meant for a variety of age groups could involve Club members, local residents who might be potential Club members, staff and school students. New skills such as word-processing and desk-top publishing could be learnt, skills such as photography and calligraphy shared, contact made through interviews, and understanding developed over old photographs and reminiscence. The end product would not just be an interesting and engaging publication, but a multitude of new links to be explored both within the school and the community.

Not all schools, of course, have the opportunity to give a week to activities that could embrace so many participants, but most could use such a local history project as a springboard to develop skills that are subject based: history, personal and social education, art, information technology, English and geography. The support and experience that Club members could bring to such initiatives would be crucial. Nor should the traffic in ideas be one way. Once given a voice, Club members will be able to be proactive in the developing and continuing relationship with the school. This will only be possible if a structure exists for them to make their ideas heard, and for this reason it is desirable that all host schools should establish the appropriate structures for this exchange of ideas. Ideally this should take the form of a small committee that meets regularly and includes Club members, staff and school students. In this way, Hobman Clubs will evolve from the needs of the school and community.

The evidence from the existing Clubs would suggest that if a dynamic and purposeful relationship is to develop between the Hobman Club and its host school, this can only be achieved with considerable work and goodwill on both sides. It is unlikely to be successfully established if initiated from 'outside'. Intermediate agencies such as Age

Concern have proved the value of their involvement in two of the established Clubs, both of which relied on the individual enthusiasm and support of Age Concern staff. However, the level of support required to maintain and sustain a Club through its early months, cannot be achieved by an agency which is not involved on a day to day basis with the host school.. At best such intermediaries can act as facilitators around which local schools and agencies with links to the elderly can meet.

The experience of this particular project would also appear to support this conclusion. The work of the organisation BASE was focused on establishing a number of new clubs within the twelve months of the project. Failure to achieve this outcome is linked to the experience of the successful Hobman Clubs. It is extremely difficult for an outside agency to immerse itself in the culture of particular schools and to see them within their wider community framework. Individuals who work within these institutions and communities are better placed to understand the needs that exist or the possibilities for what might be established. It was perhaps foreseeable that an outside agency should find it difficult to act as more than a facilitator, which could introduce a concept of intergenerational learning to a variety of agencies. Continuing support would then be needed within the schools in developing their own locally responsive initiatives. This has happened to a limited extent in three schools who are hoping to establish Hobman Clubs in the future.

It seems appropriate, therefore, that should funding be available for developmental work, it would be most successfully used in small start-up grants for equipment, or in supporting the involvement of a member of the school staff, rather than in employing the services of such an agency. The cost of such development time would need to be assessed by individual schools within the wider framework of developing community links. However, costs would be ongoing and are unlikely to be saved by the involvement of a voluntary support group within the first year of the Clubs active life.

Funding could also be usefully employed to sustain the administration of a 'network', which would fulfil a number of roles. Firstly, it would provide the channel through which existing Clubs could share their ideas, successes and problems. All the Hobman Clubs I visited were particularly keen to hear about the other Clubs and how they were developing. The network could also be used to disseminate information to potential Club members and schools, and to publicise the scheme to a wider audience through the local and national press.

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